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III. — *The Sources of Seneca de Beneficiis.*

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THE study of Greek philosophy has long been regarded as one of the most interesting and profitable branches of philological research, and has attracted to itself many of the most able scholars of the present century. Prominent among these stands Eduard Zeller, whose history of Greek Philosophy embodies the results of his own accurate study based upon the previous investigations of others. But it cannot be expected that a history of Greek Philosophy, even so admirable a history as that of Zeller, should give in every particular the last attainable result, especially in regard to those philosophers whose works have been lost, and whose doctrines are preserved only in the writings of later admirers or opponents who not infrequently avoided all mention of the authors from whose works their own were compiled. The voluminous *Untersuchungen zu Ciceros philosophischen Schriften* by Rudolph Hirzel have shown, among other things, how many questions concerning Cicero's philosophical writings still remain unsolved, the solution of which will throw much light upon the philosophy of the first and second centuries before Christ. But while many questions in regard to Cicero remain unsolved, his works have been thoroughly and carefully investigated, and our knowledge of the sources of his compilations is constantly increasing.

This is true of Seneca to a much less degree. For the most part the investigations into the sources of his writings have been embodied as subordinate parts in works treating of other subjects.¹ This is partly because Cicero is much

¹ An exception is Guilelmus Allers, de L. A. Senecae librorum de ira fontibus diss. inaug. Gotting. 1881. The author adopts (p. 18) the exploded opinion of Heine and Bake (vide P. Corssen de Posidonio Rhodio M. Tullii Ciceronis in lib. I Tusc. disp. cet. auctore, Bonn, 1878 and Rhein. Mus. XXXVI, p. 506, and Zeller, Phil. d. Griechen III, 1, p. 563, 1 ed. iii) that Cicero followed Chrysippus

more generally read than Seneca, but partly, too, because Seneca is comparatively free in his treatment of his sources, and rarely mentions his authority for any theory or opinion, so that his sources, especially when he follows authors of whom we know but little, are exceedingly difficult to discover. The books *de Beneficiis* offer, however, certain indications, which, if properly utilized, enable us to determine to some extent the source from which these, at least, are drawn. There is much the origin of which is still uncertain, but I hope that the following investigation will disclose the source of at least the greater part of the books in question.²

As Seneca always considers himself a Stoic, we should naturally expect him to keep the books of some Stoic philosopher at hand rather than those of a follower of any other doctrines, and we should also, judging from the analogy of Cicero and, to some extent, of Plutarch, expect him to follow not so much the founder of the sect as some of its later members. Still, as Seneca did not confine his studies to the writings of the Stoics, but was more or less intimately acquainted with the doctrines of other sects, and even, as appears from many passages of the epistles, an admirer of some of the Epicurean tenets, we must not take it for granted that he always follows Stoic authorities, though he does so for the most part.

One of the first things that strike the reader of the books *de Beneficiis* is, that the whole work is divided into three parts. The first four books are closely connected with one another, and treat of benefits in general, how they should be bestowed, and how received. Book V begins the second part with the words "In prioribus libris videbar consummasse

in the fourth book of the *Tusculan Disputations*. Consequently he considers (p. 75) Chrysippus one of the chief sources of *Seneca de Ira*. Whether we agree with Hirzel (*Unters.*, II, pp. 342-392) that Cicero took the substance of the *Tusculan Disputations* from Philo, or not, we cannot believe without further proof that Seneca took as his chief authority an author as old as Chrysippus. Perhaps we should ascribe a more prominent part to Sotion (cf. Allers, pp. 10 and 75).

² Part of the present article is, in substance, contained in my dissertation *Panaetii et Hecatonis Librorum Fragmenta*, Bonn, 1885, pp. 24-28.

propositum, cum tractassem, quemadmodum dandum esset beneficium, quemadmodum accipiendum. hi enim sunt huius officii fines: quicquid ultra moror, non servio materiae, sed indulgeo, quae quo ducit sequenda est, non quo inuitat." In this and the following book various special points are discussed and illustrated by examples. Of the seventh book Seneca says: "Reliqua hic liber cogit et exhausta materia circumspicio non quid dicam, sed quid non dixerim." This is the third and last part of the whole work.

This division into three parts was evidently intended by Seneca, though we cannot at once tell whether it originated with him or was adopted from the plan of the work or works which he employed. At any rate, we must treat the three parts separately.

The first two sections of the first book offer no indication of their origin. To be sure, the Stoic paradox "*reddit enim beneficium qui libenter debet*" (I, 1) is repeated II, xxx and IV, xxi, but that is at best but a doubtful indication of Seneca's indebtedness to the same authority in different portions of his work, without helping us to find out who that authority is.³

From section iii we derive more information. Seneca exhorts us to overwhelm the ungrateful with benefits. "*Beneficiis tuis illum cinge, quorum quae uis quaeue proprietas sit dicam, si prius illa, quae ad rem non pertinent, transsilire mihi permiseris: quare tres Gratiae et quare sorores sint,*" etc. The discussion of these questions concerning the Graces does not, as Seneca admits, pertain to the question. Yet he does not omit it. The natural inference from this is, that he found this discussion in the book from which he took what precedes, and the opening words of section v⁴ seem to show that the same author is followed in the succeeding sections. Section iii, 9 we are told who this author is; for after mentioning Chrysippos as one who filled his books with such

³ Cicero de Off. II, xx, 69 gives the same paradox in a somewhat different form.

⁴ Sed quemadmodum superuacua transcurram, ita exponam necesse est hoc primum nobis esse discendum, etc.

useless questions, Seneca goes on: "Nam praeter ista, quae Hekaton transscribit tres Chrysippus Gratias ait Iouis et Eurynomes filias esse," etc. This evidently means: up to this point I have followed Hekaton, but add a little from Chrysippos.⁵ Accordingly Chrysippos is quoted and criticised until (section v) Seneca returns with the words above cited to Hekaton. How much of what follows belongs to Hekaton does not immediately appear, inasmuch as there is no place where a new authority appears to be introduced. Section viii contains an anecdote about Socrates and his follower Aeschines which would certainly be likely to occur in a book by a collector of *Xpeîai* like Hekaton.⁶ This might lead us to believe that Hekaton is followed at least to section ix, and if so, then somewhat further, though as such anecdotes were very common, not much importance is to be attached to them. The anecdote does not prove that Hekaton is the source of these sections, but adds a little to the probability that he who was followed a few sections before is not yet deserted.

The whole first book treats of the manner of conferring benefits, and the same subject is continued through the first seventeen sections of book II. Before II, xviii we meet with no clear indication of the author followed by Seneca, but a few hints point still to Hekaton. The story told II, x, of Arkesilaos who secretly put a purse under the pillow of a needy friend is also told by Laertios Diogenes (IV, vi, § 37), Plutarch (*de adul. et amic.* xxii) and the emperor Julian (*Or.* III, p. 103 D). Laertios not infrequently⁷ cites the *Xpeîai* of Hekaton, and it is not improbable that the other two authors took the story, directly or indirectly, from that work, for Hekaton was one of the first and most noted collectors of such anecdotes, and it is certainly probable that Hekaton

⁵ Apparently Chrys. *περὶ Χρηρίων*, cf. Philodem. *de piet.* col. XIV, 5 = Gercke Chrysippea fr. X. Hermes with the Graces mentioned also Plut. *de r. r. audiendi* XIII, p. 44 E and *conj. praec.* p. 138 C.

⁶ On the life and writings of Hekaton see Panaetii et Hecatonis librorum fragmenta, pp. 18-29.

⁷ VI, 32; VI, 95; VII, 26; VI, 4; VII, 172.

garnished his other works with the anecdotes he collected.⁸ The beginning of section xiv, "Sunt quaedam nocitura impetrantibus, quae non dare, sed negare beneficium est: aestimabimus itaque utilitatem potius quam voluntatem petentium," may be compared with Cicero's words de Off. I, xiv, 42, "Videndum est enim primum ne obsit benignitas et iis ipsis quibus benigne uidebitur fieri . . . nam et qui gratificantur cuiuspiam quod obsit illi cui prodesse uelle uideantur, non benefici neque liberales sed perniciosi assentatores iudicandi sunt." The similarity of these passages becomes significant when we remember that Cicero is confessedly following Panaitios,⁹ and that Hekaton was a pupil of Panaitios.¹⁰ Seneca II, xv, 3 also reminds us of Cicero de Off. I, xiv, 42, 44, but we will recur to this point later.

Hekaton is again cited, II, xviii, as saying that those duties which imply reciprocity of action are difficult to regulate. But this cannot be separated from the following words, "omne enim honestum in arduo est," nor is there any break before section xix. That section and the next are evidently not derived from any Greek source, and were probably expressly intended by Seneca to make his work more popular with Roman readers by reference to matters with which they were familiar. In section xxi Hekaton is again cited by name, and Seneca censures him in these words: "Ineptum et frivolum hoc Hekaton ponit exemplum Arcesilai," etc. Seneca has no reason to disagree with Hekaton upon this point of detail unless he has been agreeing with him in what precedes, and the choice of the word *ponit* also seems to show that Hekaton put this inappropriate illustration at this point of the discussion and that Seneca objects to it largely on account of its position. So here, again, it seems that a passage of some length must be derived from Hekaton, and we must assign to him at least from xviii, 2 to xxi, 4 inclusive, with the exception, of course, of sections xix and xx.

⁸ II, xvi contains a story about Alexander, and II, xvii one about Antigonos and a Cynic. This last is told also Plut. reg. et imp. apophth. Antig. XV and de vit. pud. VII.

⁹ Cic. Ep. ad Att. xvi, 11, 2; de Off. III, ii, 7.

¹⁰ Cic. de Off. III, xv, 63.

It has been already remarked by Zeller¹¹ that what we read III, xviii–xxviii about receiving benefits from slaves, with the exception of the illustrations in sections xxiii–xxvii, is derived from Hekaton. It would be natural enough for Hekaton to believe that a master could receive benefits or favors from a slave, for we find his teacher Panaitios treating justice toward slaves as a duty. Cicero following Panaitios says (*de Off.* I, xiii, 41), “meminerimus autem etiam aduersus infimos iustitiam esse seruandam, est autem infima condicio et fortuna seruorum, quibus non male praecipiunt¹² qui ita iubent uti ut mercenariis, operam exigendam, iusta prae-benda.” If justice toward slaves is worth advocating, it can only be because injustice is possible, so that the doctrine of Panaitios just cited is a negative statement of the doctrine that a master can receive benefits from his slave. As Seneca (III, xxii, 3) expresses it: “inter se contraria sunt beneficium et iniuria; potest dare beneficium domino si a domino iniuriam accipere.”¹³ The doctrine advanced by Seneca coincides, then, with that of Panaitios, but it cannot be derived directly from him, for if it were, Seneca could not say (xviii, 1), “quamquam quaesitur a quibusdam *sicut ab Hecatone* an beneficium dare seruus domino possit.” The mention of Hekaton by name makes it certain that this whole discussion is to be attributed to him.

In the fourth book Hekaton is not once mentioned, nor is any other author except Epicurus (ii) and Plato (xxxiii) once each, and Zeno twice (xxxix), and these in such a way as to show that they are not the authors chiefly consulted, even if it were not, as it is, highly improbable that Seneca consulted them directly at all. On the other hand, there are sufficient indications that Hekaton is the chief authority followed in this book, as in the first three. This book continues those which precede it, both in matter and manner, so that we should not be justified in separating it from them. This is

¹¹ Phil. d. Griech. III, 1, p. 300, 2 ed. iii.

¹² That Chrysippos is referred to we learn from Sen. de Ben. III, xxii, 1, “Seruus ut placet Chrysippo perpetuus mercenarius est.”

¹³ Cf. IV, xv, 1: “numquid dubium est, quin contraria sit beneficio iniuria?”

a negative argument for Hekaton, but there are also positive arguments. The influence of Panaitios becomes manifest by comparison of section xviii and following with Cic. de Off. I, iv, 11 and following, and section xxxiv and following with Cic. de Off. III, xxiv, 92 and following. This last passage of Cicero has been ascribed by Hirzel¹⁴ to Hekaton, but his arguments do not seem to me conclusive.¹⁵ Still, if Hekaton is not Cicero's authority at this point, Posidonios is, and he also was a pupil of Panaitios.

A comparison of Sen. de Ben. II, xv, 3 with Cic. de Off. I, 14 is instructive.

SENECA: Respiciendae sunt cuique facultates suae viresque ne aut plus praestemus quam possumus aut minus. aestimanda est eius persona cui damus; quaedam enim minora sunt quam ut exire a magnis uiris debeant, quaedam accipiente maiora sunt. utriusque itaque personam confer et ipsum inter illas quod donabis examina, num quid aut danti graue sit aut parum, num quid rursus qui accepturus est aut fastidiat aut non capiat.

CICERO: Alter locus erat cautionis ne benignitas maior esset quam facultates, quod qui benigniores uolunt esse quam res patitur primum in eo peccant quod iniuriosi sunt in proximos; quas enim copias his et suppeditari aequius est et relinqui, eas transferunt ad alienos . . . 45 tertium est propositum ut in beneficentia dilectus esset dignitatis, etc.

The general similarity of the two passages is evident, but there is also a difference; Cicero (Panaitios) warns us against conferring benefits beyond our means, because by so doing we may injure others who have a just claim upon us. Seneca (Hekaton) does not touch upon this point. He says we should examine ourselves and the person we desire to benefit, and after due consideration should allot to each that which is most fitting, — we should regard the matter as if we were not personally concerned, and strike a balance between the needs and deserts of the persons interested. The same mode of action is elsewhere advocated by Hekaton, Sen. de Ben. II, xvii, 2: “adspicienda ergo non minus sua cuique persona est quam eius de quo iuuando quis cogitat. uolo Chrysippi nostri uti similitudine de pilae lusu;¹⁶ quam cadere non est

¹⁴ Untersuchungen zu Ciceros philosophischen Schriften, II, p. 726.

¹⁵ See Panaetii et Hecatonis fragmenta, p. 7 sq.

¹⁶ Cf. II, xxxii, 1.

dubium aut mittentis uitio aut excipientis," and Cic. de Off. III, xxiii, 90: "quid? si una tabula sit, duo naufragi eique sapientes, sibine uterque rapiat an alter cedat alteri? cedat uero, sed ei cuius magis intersit uel sua uel rei publicae causa uiuere," and a similar tendency is evident in all the passages of Hekaton which Cicero cites.¹⁷ This spirit is very noticeable in Seneca's fourth book de Beneficiis, especially in those sections which treat of the permissible and proper non-fulfilment of promises (xxxiv sqq.). For instance xxxvi, 2: "est aliquid, in eo quod promiseris perseuerare. est rursus multum in eo, ne indigno beneficium des. hoc tamen quantum est? si leue conueamus. si uero magno mihi aut detrimento aut rubori futurum, malo semel excusare, quare negaverim, quam semper, quare dederim," and xxxix, 3: "ad cenam quia promisi ibo etiam si frigus erit; non quidem si niues cadunt. surgam ad sponsalia quia promisi, quamuis non concoxerim; sed non si febricitauero. sponsum descendam quia promisi; sed non si spondere me incertum iubebis, si fisco obligabis."

So it seems to me certain that Seneca followed Hekaton in the fourth as well as the first three books; that is, throughout the first of the three parts into which the work is divided.

The second part of the work (books V and VI) contains little from which any conclusions as to its sources can be drawn. The questions discussed are, as Seneca says (V, i), *connexa, non cohaerentia*. Possibly, from the references to Kleantes (V, xiv, 1; VI, xi, 1; VI, xii, 2), who is not mentioned at all in the preceding books, we might infer that one of Kleantes' contemporaries or immediate successors furnished Seneca with material; but this is very uncertain. Probably Hekaton is followed here as in the first part. The questions discussed are such as might naturally have interested the Hekaton of Cic. de Off. III, xxiii, 89 sqq., as, for instance, the questions whether one can confer a favor upon one's self, and whether one ought to return thanks to one's self (V, vii

¹⁷ De Off. III, xii, 49 sqq.; III, xv, 63; III, xxiii, 89 sqq.; and also in III, xxiv, 92 sqq., which gives additional strength to Hirzel's hypothesis that this passage is taken from Hekaton.

sqq.), and whether one should be grateful to those who have benefited him unwillingly or unwittingly (VI, vii sqq.). The passage (VI, xx sqq.) in which our indebtedness to the powers of nature (and the gods) is discussed, coincides in doctrine with the passage on the same subject in book IV (v sqq.), but elsewhere (VI, vii) it is taken for granted that no one need be grateful for the advantages derived from nature. Still, as this last passage represents rather a popular belief than a philosophical doctrine, the inconsistency is only apparent. Hekaton is cited once (VI, xxxvii) as authority for an anecdote, and this may perhaps indicate that his authority is followed in other matters as well, but for this there is no strong evidence. On the whole, however, as Hekaton is certainly the chief source of the first part, it is not improbable that he was also largely consulted for the second.

Book VII begins, after a few words of introduction, with the citation of a new authority, — Demetrius the Cynic,¹⁸ for whom Seneca expresses the greatest admiration, saying that he is "*uir meo iudicio magnus, etiamsi maximis comparetur.*" He is here quoted as saying that it is better to have a few precepts of wisdom always at hand than to know many things and be unable to use them. This doctrine is elaborated through section i, and section ii begins with the words: "*Haec Demetrius noster utraque manu tenere proficientem iubet.*" It seems, then, that Seneca must be following Demetrius at least through the first section and part of the second.¹⁹ Yet if this is the case, Demetrius cannot easily be distinguished from many other writers. Certainly section i, 7 shows a marked resemblance to Cic. de Off. I, vii, 22. The doctrines of section ii, "*nec malum esse ullum nisi turpe nec bonum nisi honestum,*" are common to Cynics and Stoics alike. Where Demetrius is mentioned again (section viii) it is rather as a brilliant example of cynicism in his practical life than as a writer, and Zeller is certainly

¹⁸ Zeller, *Phil. d. Griech.* III, i, p. 687 sq. ed. ii.

¹⁹ Zeller l. c. thinks not. Little is known of Demetrius' writings, and though he is cited several times by Seneca, it does not appear that his writings are referred to so much as verbal communications.

right in saying that the following sections are not dependent upon him. Section xiv discusses the question whether one who has tried to return a favor is freed from obligation even though his efforts have met with no success. This point has already been touched upon (II, xvii; III, ii. sqq.). So the passage in section xxxi in which the various degrees of ingratitude of mankind toward the gods are mentioned reminds us of the passages referred to above (IV, v sqq.; VI, vii and xxii sq.) which treat of the same subject, and the advice given in this section, that we continue our beneficence in spite of ingratitude, brings us back to the "beneficiis tuis illum cinge" of I, iii. In short, though there is nothing in this book which points clearly to any one author, it agrees so well in every way with the previous books,²⁰ that I am inclined to believe that this also is mainly derived from Hekaton. If this is the case, the division of the whole work into three parts was probably found by Seneca in the work of Hekaton.

No work of Hekaton is known corresponding in title to that of Seneca, but we know from Cicero²¹ that Hekaton wrote a work *περὶ καθήκοντος* (de officiis) which contained at least six books. It is very probable that the "beneficia" were treated at length in this work,²² and that this is the main source of Seneca de Beneficiis.

²⁰ The paradox of Bion in section vii reminds us of similar paradoxes in V, xii and xiv.

²¹ De Off. III, xv, 63; III, xxiii, 89.

²² Cicero treats of this subject cursorily, De Off. I, xiv, 42 sqq.; II, xv, 52 sqq.